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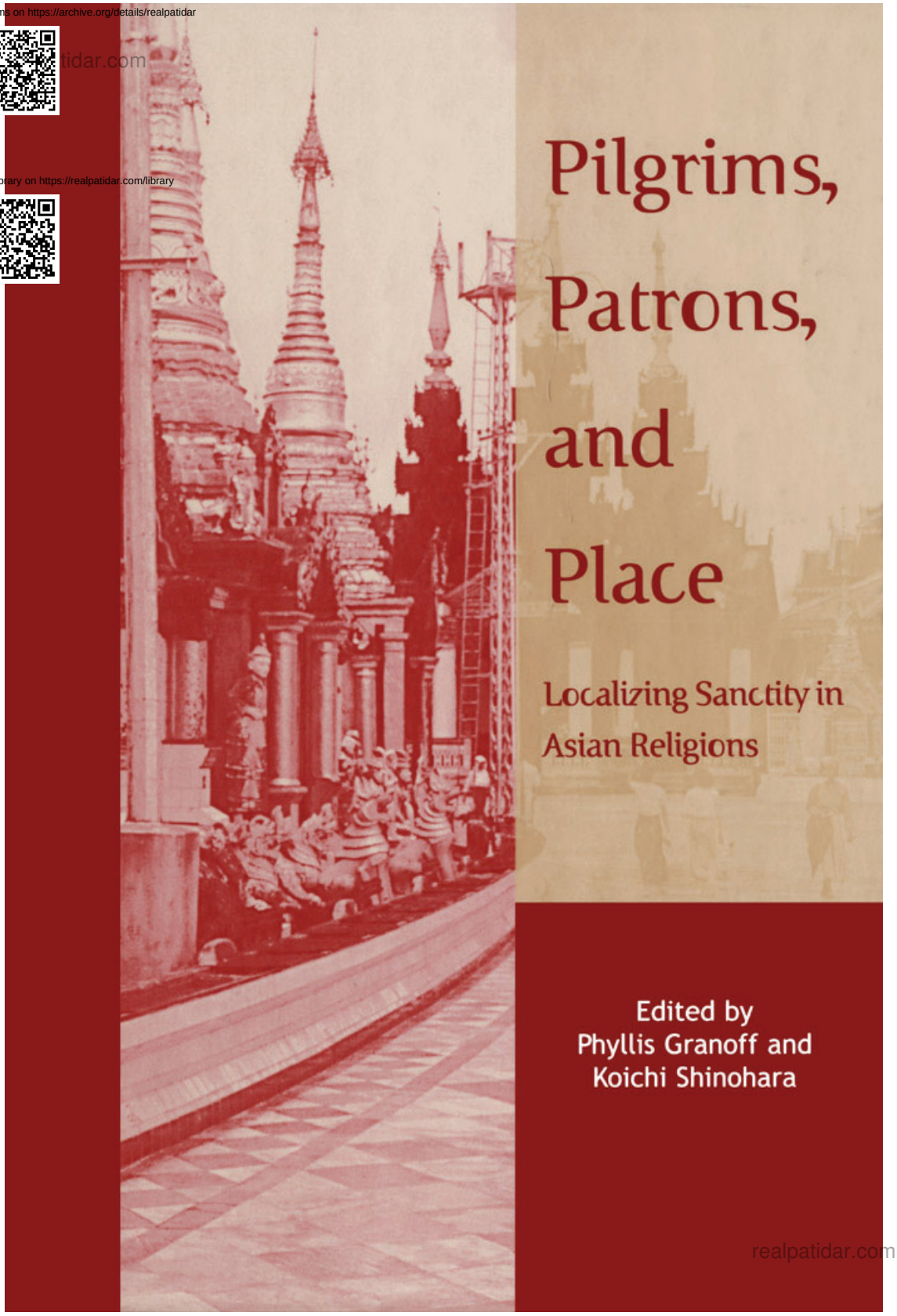

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For Reference See Pages: 2, 3, 4.
For page numbers, see the page footer. Page numbers are in 'Page x of y' format

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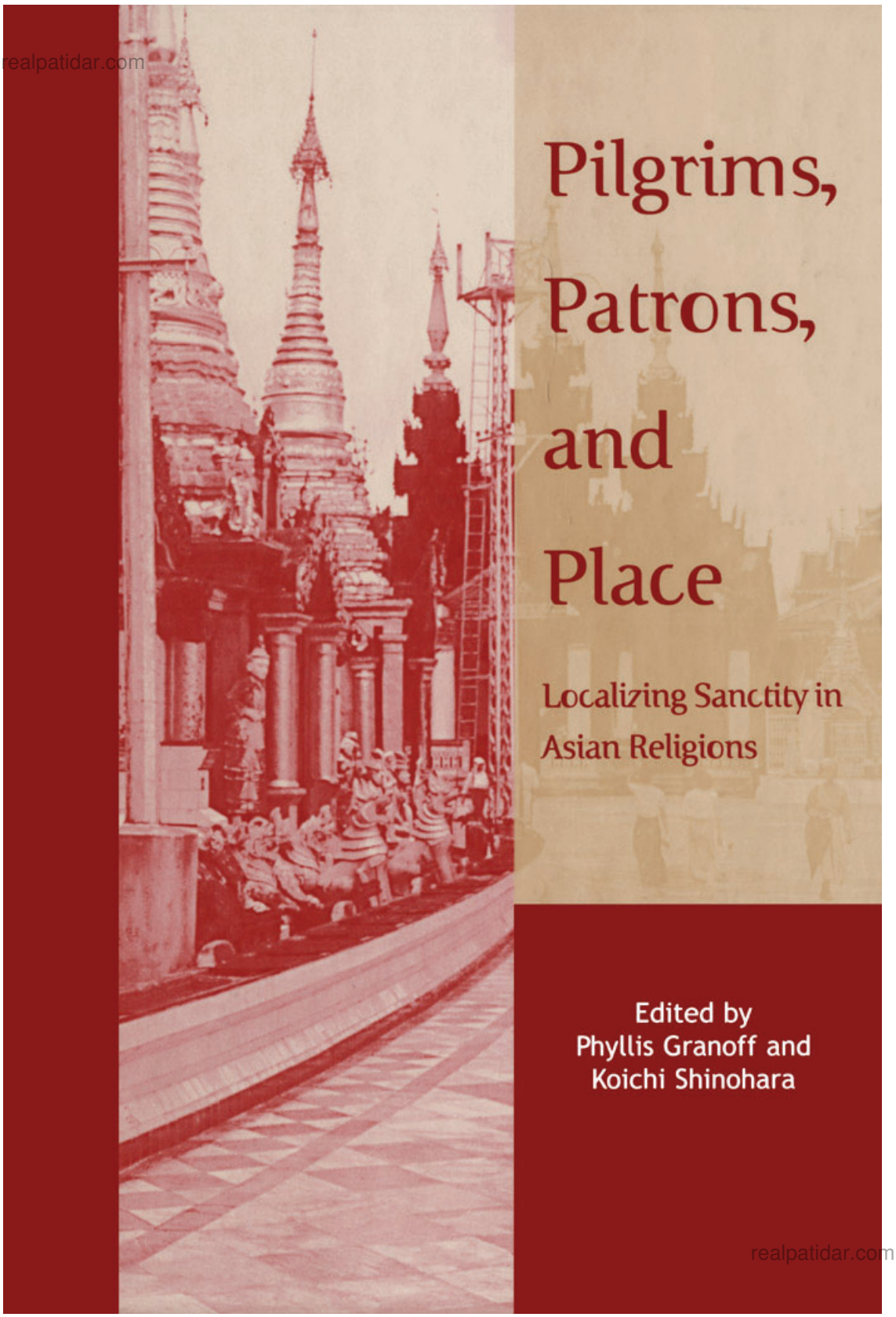

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Pilgrims, Patrons, and Place:

See Page 333 to 343 (as per the book)

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Loka-dharma and Sant-*vāṇī* in Saurashtra

Among the authors who devoted their lives to collecting details about and describing this popular religious culture is Jayamall Parmar. In the 548 pages of one of his last works, *Sevādharamanā amaradhāma*,[2] 'Timeless Places in the Service of Religion,' he gives an account of the many different religious currents in Saurashtra: the Śaivite sanctuaries, be they big or small; the Samādhis, or tombs, of Hindu or Muslim saints or holy men; the worship of the Devī and Śakti; the Sun temples; the centres of various *sampradāyas* (such as the Svāmī Nārāyaṇīs, the Pranāmīs, or the Rāmānandīs); and community fairs like Tarṇetar, Madhavpur, and Bhavanāth at Mt Girnar. He also describes the vernacular literature and hymns, which speak of these groups and places. In addition to his book publications, he collected an abundance of details in the 732 issues of his magazine *Ūrmi Navaracanā,* published monthly from 1930 until 1991.

These popular religious currents are not mutually exclusive but often share common features. For instance, the *Sant-vāṇī*, a corpus of hymns shaped by Tantric influence, is the common property of different faith groups. Indeed, the *Sant-vāṇī* is held in high esteem by the entire Gujarati public despite its use of dialectal features that are particular to Saurashtra or Kacchī. The *Sant-vāṇī* originated from the combined activities of different groups of *loka-dharma* such as the Mahāpanth, Ravibhaṇpanth, Nāthpanth, Kabīrpanth, and – although at present its followers are no longer conscious of the fact – the Satpanth, the old name of the converted Nizārī Isma'īlīs in Gujarat and Kutch.

The Mahāpanthīs, also called by the names Mahāmārgīs, Bījamārgīs, and Nijārpanthīs, are a movement older and more numerous than the others, and are one of the secret Tantric sects of Gujarat. Theoretically open to all castes and all religions, the Mahāpanthīs are controlled by the caste of the untouchable Meghvāḷs. Only those who have received initiation from the guru may take part in the secret rites, the principal of which is the *pāṭa-pūjā,* celebrated by couples chosen according to their state of spiritual advancement (*jati-satī*). It is held on the second day of each lunar month (*bīja*), in honour of the Supreme Principle worshipped as *jyota-agni-nūr*, light and sun, the equivalent of Primeval Energy. In addition to Śiva Ādināth, the mythological founders of the movement are Ramdeopir,[3] Sahadev Jośī, and Devāyat Paṇḍit, the latter two belonging to both the Mahāmārgīs and the Isma'īlīs Nizārīs, called Satpanthīs.

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dharmic order, the upsetting of natural phenomena, and so on. These *vāṇī* announce the arrival of the saving *avatāra*, Naklaṃka-Naklaṃki (or Niṣkalaṃka), corresponding to the tenth *avatāra* of Viṣṇu, Kalki, who will abolish untouchability and restore a new golden age in the Mahāpanthī context, or to Ali, the son-in-law of the Prophet, announcing the final resurrection (*Qiyama*), in the Nizārī Isma'īlī context.[6]

The structure, themes, and texts of the Mahāmārgī *bhajana* are also common to the other communities, or *loka-dharma*, mentioned above:

– The Nāths are always associated with the Mahāpanthīs, for instance in their ritual texts such as the *Delamī-ārādha* of Devāyat Paṇḍit, which includes Ādināth (Śiva), Cauraṅgīnāth, Matsyendranāth, and Gorakhnāth;[7] the *bhajana* as well as the *pāṭa-pūjā* are often led either by a Mahāpanthī guru or a Nāth; the Mahāpanthī-Nāth confraternity may also express itself through the choice of places for an *āśrama*. For instance Devīdās, a Mahāpanthī saint whose guru Loha-Laṅgarī was a Ramānandī, received from his spiritual master the order to settle on the site of an abandoned Nāth shrine at Vāvdī.
– The Ravibhāṇapanthīs are named after two of their gurus: Bhāṇa (1698–1755), a disciple of Kabīr and a rather late propagator in Gujarat of the Kabīrian message, and his disciple Ravi (1727–1804). Their successors Khīmsāheb, Trikāmsāheb, and Dāsījīvana are famous authors of *vāṇī* sung in every *bhajana*. The Ravibhāṇapanthīs are untouchables, as is often the case with the Kabīrpanthīs, who will take part in any *Sant-vāṇī-bhajana* even if Mahāpanthīs dominate the gathering. On the other hand a local group of ascetics, the Kāpaḍīs renouncers whose mission it is to sing the Nāth cycles of Gopīcand and Bhatṛhari as well as to be in the service of the living (*prāṇī-sevā*), takes its inspiration from the teaching of Kabīr. Kāpaḍīs wear the traditional pointed cap of Kabīr.
– It seems that at one stage the Nizārī Isma'īlī Satpanthīs of the region belonged to the same nucleus of religions. Of course, nowadays this is no longer acknowledged. The Khojas, as the Nizārī Isma'īlī are now called, form a closed community of middle rank in society; they are unaware of all they have in common with the *santa-vāṇī* tradition. However, their *ginān*, religious songs in the vernacular and secretly preserved, have characteristics of style, choice of metaphors, literary forms, and teaching in common with the *Sant-vāṇī*. The

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